

Section I (Amendments to the Claims)

Please amend claims 1 and 15-18, as set out in the following listing of the claims of the application.

1. (Currently amended) An ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa and isolated from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP), ~~wherein the PGA has high moisture absorbing properties, high moisture retaining properties, and high Ca solubility.~~
2. (Previously presented) The PGA according to claim 1, which has a mean molecular weight in a range of from 5,000 to 15,000 kDa.
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Withdrawn) A hydrogel produced from the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
5. (Withdrawn) Cosmetics containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
6. (Withdrawn) Foods containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
7. (Withdrawn) Feedstuffs containing the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3.
8. (Withdrawn) A water-absorbing agent containing the hydrogel according to claim 4.
9. (Withdrawn) A mineral absorption-promoting composition, which contains the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3, and a mineral.
10. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, which has a sustained release property.
11. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, wherein the mineral is Ca, Fe, Mg, Cu or Se.
12. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 9, wherein the PGA is substituted with a copolymer of an ultra-high molecular weight PGA having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa and a polyamino acid bearing a positive charge.

13. (Withdrawn) The mineral absorption-promoting composition according to claim 12, wherein the polyamino acid is polylysine or polyarginine.
14. (Withdrawn) A method for using the PGA according to any one of claims 1 to 3 for a mineral absorption-promoting agent.
15. (Currently amended) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the PGA has high moisture-absorbing properties ~~comprise~~ comprising at least a 60% increase in water content over 24 hours.
16. (Currently amended) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the PGA has high moisture-retaining properties ~~comprise~~ comprising at least 90% water content retention over 24 hours.
17. (Currently amended) The PGA according to claim 1, wherein the PGA has high Ca solubility ~~comprise~~ comprising Ca solubility of at least 46%.
18. (Currently amended) An ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of 13,000 kDa and isolated from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP), ~~wherein the PGA has high moisture-absorbing properties, high moisture-retaining properties, and high Ca solubility.~~
19. (Previously presented) A composition comprising a culture of *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP) and a PGA precipitate, produced by said *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP) in said culture.
20. (Previously presented) A method for production of an ultra-high molecular weight poly-gamma-glutamate (PGA) having a mean molecular weight of at least 5,000 kDa, the method comprising isolation of the PGA from *Bacillus subtilis* var. *chunkookjang* (KCTC 0697BP).